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Photo by Tech. Sgt. Ray Sarracino



*USSOUTHCOM, Dolphins remember...
September 11, 2001*

Southern Star

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USSOUTHCOM join Miami Dolphins for pre- game salute to America

Photos and story by Tech. Sgt. Ray Sarracino
Staff Writer

MIAMI – The Miami Dolphins kicked off their 2002 season Sept. 8 with a pre-game patriotic salute to America.

Service members representing U. S. Southern Command assembled on the field for a tribute to America that included the USSOUTHCOM color guard and the Homestead Air Reserve Station honor guard.

The ceremony also included a formation on the field of more than 50 service members escorted by Dolphins cheerleaders and culminated with a fireworks display that brought the crowd to their feet amidst an atmosphere of celebration as the Dolphins’

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Miami Dolphins cheerleaders join U.S. servicemen and women on the field during the season-opener, pre-game fireworks show.

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starting lineup was introduced.

USSOUTHCOM commander, Gen. Tom Hill presided over the coin toss to begin the game, while other military personnel were escorted to field level seats to enjoy the game.

The Dolphins organization invited local military members as a

show of appreciation for their service and support to the nation.

Military members at the game appeared to enjoy the recognition and support of the crowd.

"It's always an honor to be recognized for military service," said LT Jason Menarchik of USSOUTHCOM's J2 directorate. "It's also nice to be reminded of your role in society, and how much our

society values its soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines."

With the anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks so close to this event, support for the military seemed extremely high from the fans in attendance. Yet, despite the party atmosphere of the game, many military members paused to reflect on the significance of their service during this period in the nation's history.

Col, Calvin Wimbish, Special Operations Command South liaison officer at the USSOUTHCOM Operations Directorate, said participating in the event afforded him "the opportunity to honor our great nation and the memory of friends lost at the Pentagon and the World Trade Center."

Petty Officer 3rd Class Shelley McCullough, USSOUTHCOM Intel-

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ligence Directorate, said the event reminded her of why she chose to begin her Navy career less than a year ago.

"I joined the Navy in October after everything happened," she said, referring to the Sept. 11 attacks. "I wanted to join the military ever since I was little. It made me feel like I was doing something for the country."

According to Air Force Staff Sgt. Antonio Andrade, North Miami Beach region recruiter, the recent surge of patriotism has brought about a renewed interest in joining the military.

"I think events like this

are great," he said "This helps me get the message out about the positive contributions of service."

He pointed out that, although it's difficult to track specific leads from large events, recruiters say that the large number of contacts made with the public during such events help increase public awareness about the importance of military service.

Outside of the festivities, the reason for the event—the Dolphins vs. Lions game—ended in a rout with the Dolphins taking the lead early and remaining out front throughout the game. The game ended with the Dolphins victorious, 49-21. The Lions never came close.



Navy LT. Erwig Irigoyen, USSOUTHCOM command surgeon's office, cheers for the home team during the Dolphins-Lions NFL season-opening game Sept. 8.

Domestic violence — a community concern

By Dana Cekauskas
USSOUTHCOM Family Advocacy
Program Manager

With all the publicity about recent events at Fort Bragg I am likely to be asked “Does the military have a higher rate of domestic violence than in the civilian sector?”

Actually it is rather comparable. If you consider the military to be a cross-section of American society, then what the question should be is “How big a problem is domestic violence in American society?”

In this country, a woman is more likely to be assaulted, injured or killed by a male partner than any other type of assailant. An estimated three to four million American women are beaten each year by their husbands or partners.

Each year, more than 1,000 women — about four women per day

— are killed by their husbands or partners.

Domestic violence is indeed a serious national problem that affects not only individual victims but the entire community as well.

Recognizing this, the military services have sought to prevent the problem through their family programs. For over twenty years the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) has existed in every branch of the military providing prevention through education and training as the cornerstone of their program.

Treatment programs for active duty service members who are involved in confirmed cases of abuse are, in fact, mandatory.

Unit commanders are briefed on the program, reporting is encouraged, and education of service members regarding domestic violence is required

under regulation.

The Army FAP has made great strides in the past seven years. Documented cases of spouse abuse declined 40 percent from FY95 to FY01, largely due to the implementation of prevention programs, command emphasis and the use of victim advocates at Army installations.

Nonetheless, in light of what happened at Fort Bragg, it behooves us all to become better informed of the existence of domestic violence in our society and to be ready to report suspected case of child and spouse abuse in an effort to prevent its escalation. You might save a life. For more information on family violence, to report suspected abuse or to schedule a class on family violence for your service members contact the Family Support Center (FSC) Family Advocacy Program Manager at (305) 437-2734.

Hispanic heritage observed through Oct. 15

By Theresa Fitzpatrick
USSOUTHCOM Equal Opportunity Advisor/
Liaison

Hispanics have played an important roll in the history of our Nation. Today, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 26 million people in the United States are of Hispanic origin.

Highlighting the contributions of Hispanic Americans and the cultures from which they come is the focal point for U.S. Southern Command through October 15.

Educating the USSOUTHCOM community about those contributions helps to build the self-esteem and pride of those who identify themselves with Hispanic culture.

But, even more importantly, it is essential that all of us as service members and civilians learn to understand the ethnic diversity that is our country. Integrating the cultures in our organization helps develop "ethnic literacy" in all us. Developing ethnic literacy fosters pride in one's own culture and a respect and appreciation for the uniqueness of others.

Many Hispanic Americans trace

their roots to the cultures of the indigenous peoples of the Americas — including the Arawaks and Taino (Cuba, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico), the Aztecs (Mexico), the Incas (South America) and the Maya (Central America). Others trace their roots to the Spanish explorers, who in the 1400s set out to find an easier and less costly way to trade with the Indies.

For purposes of the U.S. Census,

Hispanic Americans today are identified according to the parts of the world that they or their ancestors came from, including Mexico, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Spain, or the na-

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*...it is essential that all of us
as servicemembers and civilians learn
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Theresa Fitzpatrick
USSOUTHCOM Equal Opportunity Advisor/Liaison

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tions of Central or South America.

The Hispanic population is expected to contribute 35 percent of the nation's population growth from 1995 to 2000, 44 percent from 2000 to 2020, and 62 percent from 2020 to 2050.

By the middle of the next century, the nation's Hispanic population is expected to reach 96.5 million (24.5 percent of the total population).

Each year from now to 2050, the His-

panic population is projected to add more people to the United States than the non-Hispanic White population (or any other single race/ethnic group).

By 2005, it is projected that Hispanics will surpass non-Hispanic African Americans as the nation's second-largest race/ethnic group, behind only non-Hispanic Whites.

The Hispanic community has given us generals, admirals, philosophers, statesmen, musicians, doctors, engineers, writers, lawyers, athletes,

and Nobel Prizewinning scientists. Hispanic Americans have contributed heroically to the defense of our Nation and many have received the highest decoration our country can bestow, the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Distinguished Hispanic men and women add daily to our Nation's accomplishments in science, technology, the arts, and politics. And Hispanic citizens contribute daily to the quality of our lives.



Hispanics exhibit a special pride in our American heritage, a glowing love of family, a deep devotion to religion, and an earnest commitment to hard work.

Once a year it is appropriate that we pause to recognize and celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month.

President nominates Hagee to head Marines

By Marine Sgt. Robert Piper

**MARINE CORPS
BASE CAMP
PENDLETON, Calif. —**

Camp Pendleton's highest-ranking officer is on his way to becoming Commandant of the Marine Corps.

President George W. Bush nominated Lt. Gen. Michael W. Hagee, currently the I Marine Expeditionary Force's commanding general, Friday to become the new commandant when Gen.

James L. Jones vacates

the post next year to become NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

The final step in the nomination process is confirmation by the U.S. Senate.

"I'm honored by the nomination and, if confirmed, look forward to continuing to serve the Corps and country," Hagee said. "There is a process in place with these matters, which concludes after confirmation by the Senate. I'm focused on my

job as the I MEF commanding general until the process is complete."

Hagee assumed command of the I MEF and its nearly 45,000 Marines on July 7, 2000.

After graduating from the Naval Academy in 1968, Hagee served in Vietnam as both a platoon and rifle company commander.

His previous command assignments include the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit and 1st Marine Division.

Hagee was also the li-



Lt. Gen. Michael W. Hagee

aison officer to the U.S. Special Envoy to Somalia from 1992-1993.

No date has been set for Jones to take his new position with NATO.

Unitas Marines storm Ecuador beach

Photos and story by Marine Staff Sgt. Sam Kille
MARFOR Unitas PAO

JARAMIJO, Ecuador — Before the sun made its way over the horizon, nearly 100 U.S. and 80 Ecuadorian Marines, assaulted the beach at the naval base here, Sept. 10, as part of Unitas 43-02, an annual series of training exercises conducted with Latin American maritime forces.

The amphibious training exercise was an excellent opportunity for the two nations to share ideas and tactics. During

the exercise, the Marines launched their landing from the well deck of the USS Portland (LSD-37) using amphibious assault vehicles. Once ashore, the Marines conducted patrols, engaged “enemy guerillas,” and fired each other’s weapons.

“The knowledge we gained from them (the Ecuadorians) just can’t be found in any textbook,” said Cpl. Joe Rocha, a fire team leader with 1st Platoon, Company D, Marine Forces Unitas.

Rocha, a reserve

Marine who left behind his position as a supervisor with UPS in Corpus Christi, Texas, to deploy with MARFOR Unitas, went on to say that because of the dense vegetation it was unlike any training he had been through before.

“After we hit the beach (and left our AAVs), we actually had to use machetes to get through the bush,” Rocha said. “It was very thick, and there were all kinds of prickly thorns. It



Amphibious assault vehicles, carrying both U.S. and Ecuadorian Marines, make their way onto the beach at Jaramijo, Ecuador, Sept. 10.

wasn’t like humping through the woods back home and at Camp Lejeune (North Carolina).”

According to Maj. Rod Long, command-

ing officer, Co. D, the exercise was an eye-opener for his Marines.

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Lt. Col. Anthony Hattey, commanding officer of MARFOR Unitas, standing in the troop commanders hatch of an AAV, surveys the landing area during an amphibious assault training exercise at Jaramijo, Ecuador, Sept. 10.

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“Because the Ecuadorians don’t have the resources we have, things like maps were old and outdated,” said Long, a reserve Marine who is an executive recruiter for Corporate

Leads in Houston, Texas. “In an environment like this, you quickly learn that technology only goes so far--we really had to get back to the basics out here.”

The basics included using terrain features vice grid coordinates for land navigation, and methods of

patrolling.

“The Ecuadorians know the terrain; they know how to get somewhere in a timely manner,” said Long. “Because of this, what would take us three hours to do, took them thirty minutes. We learned to rethink the way we do things.”

Though there was a lot for the U.S. Marines to learn regarding operations in a foreign environment, there was much knowledge to pass on to the Ecuadorians-especially regarding the U.S. Marines’ trademark amphibious assault.

“They were in awe of the AAVs,” said Long. “All they have for amphibious operations are their version of our Zodiac boats. I think they learned a lot from us.”

The exercise was equally beneficial to MARFOR Unitas’ Assault

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Amphibious Vehicle Platoon. It was the platoon's first opportunity to actually conduct operations ashore since they departed Camp Lejeune in July.

"We really needed the time off of ship," said Gunnery Sgt. Scott Woodring, platoon sergeant, AAV Plt. "We really needed to exercise our vehicles—the more they sit, the more chances there are for them to break down."

Because of the sandy hills and thick brush, said Woodring, who works for the U.S. Postal Service in Dunedin, Fla., the vehicles definitely got a workout here.

"Most of our Marines have never driven in an environment like this," Woodring said. "They are getting experience here that they would never receive back home."

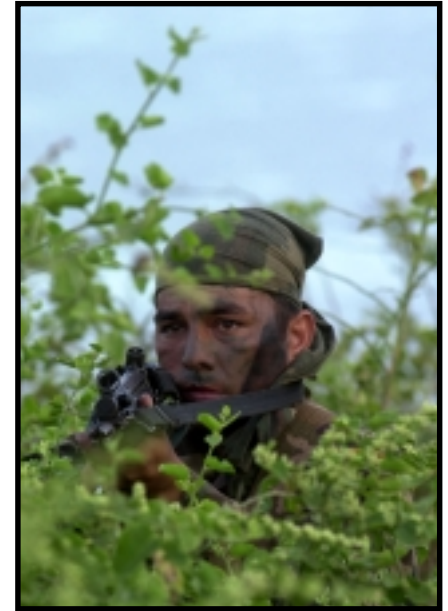
The exercise was also an opportunity for both nations to learn about each other's cultures. In doing so, according to many of the U.S. Marines, they gained a greater appreciation for home.

"When you see how little these people have, you realize how lucky we are to live in a wealthy nation," said Long. "Even an MRE (meal ready-to-eat) looks different after seeing how little they have—it's a lot harder to complain about the little things."

The U.S. Marines headed back to the USS Portland, Sept. 11, to make preparations for their departure from Ecuador. From here, they will circumnavigate South America, stopping along the way to train with other nations, including Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. The training here should be beneficial to their journey.

"This deployment is providing us excellent training and a wealth of knowledge," said Lance Cpl. Scott Kasules, a reserve machine gunner with Weapons Plt., and a special education teacher assistant from Elgin, Ill. "The more we do, the better we get. This training is the closest

you can get to combat without actually being in combat—in today's world, this is more important than ever."



An Ecuadoran Reconnaissance Marine provides security on the beach for Marine Forces.

USARSO headquarters moving to Texas

By Jonathon Williamson
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — U.S. Army South will move its headquarters from Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico, to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, during the 2003 Fiscal Year.

The move is a result of an overall headquarters realignment assessment that aims to provide the Army with greater efficiency and personnel savings, said Secretary of the Army Thomas E. White.

Upon completion of the move, USARSO will become a major subordinate command of U.S. Army Forces Command.

This will allow

USARSO to reduce its number of personnel from 400 to 300 as well as much of its headquarters overhead.

About 100

positions,

mostly

military,

can now

be reas-

signed to

support

new

structures

and the

Army's trans-

formation, offi-

cials said. Additional

personnel savings are ex-

pected in the future as the

garrison support agencies

are restructured, officials said.

The move will cost an estimated \$45 million,

officials said.

And the Army

will make

"every rea-

sonable

effort" to

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vilians whose po-

sitions are elimi-

nated as a result of the

move, officials added.

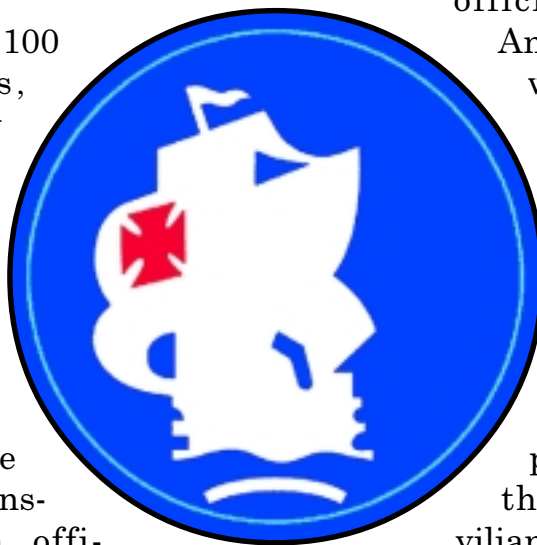
Despite several mem-

bers of Congress offering to host USARSO at sites within their constituencies, Fort Sam Houston was chosen "because of its availability of facilities and qualified workers, its relative accessibility to U.S. Southern Command and Latin America, and its ability to provide garrison support to USARSO without significant augmentation or construction," officials said.

About \$125 million in new construction at Fort Buchanan will be saved as a result of the move, officials, and more money will be saved over time.

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"More savings will be realized as the new USARSO structure takes its position in existing facilities on a more robust and mature military installation in Sam Houston ... where operating expenses and a low local cost of living will benefit the Army and personnel alike," stated Army guidance on the move.

Because of the increase of personnel being stationed at Fort Sam Houston, an environmental assessment of the area will be required.

The move is not a result of anti-American sentiment on Puerto Rico, nor does the move represent the United States neglecting foreign relations to the south, Army officials said.

"Our commitment to our friends and allies among the Caribbean Island Nations, Central America and

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Our commitment to our friends and allies among the Caribbean Island Nations, Central America and South America is as strong as ever.

U.S. Army Officials

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South America, is as strong as ever," stated Army guidance. "We've seen democracy and stability improve greatly over the past two decades throughout the Southern part of the Western Hemisphere."

Having USARSO at Fort Buchanan created transportation problems, which contributed to the move, officials said.

It became apparent that although Puerto Rico was physically located in the Southern Command area of responsibility, to reach the

main Central and South American countries required flying to the continental United States to get there.

Groups that may depart Fort Buchanan with USARSO include the 56th Signal Battalion, an aviation detachment, and the 202nd Military Intelligence Detachment.

Other posts considered for USARSO headquarters included: Fort Benning, Ga.; Fort McPherson, Ga.; Fort Jackson, S.C.; Fort Polk, La.; Fort Sill, Okla.; and Fort Chaffee, Ark.

Army Signal Group provides key support during Blue Advance 02

By Maj. Lawrence Karl
Chief, Operations Division, Army Signal Activity

Command Control Communications and Computers (C4), success in the joint/interagency operations environment requires a concerted and well-synchronized effort by communicators from Department of Defense (DoD) both military and civilian, federal agencies, and commercial industry. Army Signal Activity (ASA)-SOUTHCOM's signal support for Exercise Blue Advance 02 was one of these fine-tuned communicators.

The ASA participated in the planning, preparation and execution of Exercise Blue Advance (BA) 02. The Biological attack exercise executed Sept. 8 -13.

The post Sept. 11, defense environment drove the focus of Blue Advance. BA 02 exercised coordination and, where appropriate, command relationships between U.S. Southern Command, U.S. Northern Command, other joint commands, various federal agencies, and civil authorities during a simulated consequence management (CM) scenario.

The ASA installed a complex system of networks enabling USSOUTHCOM to meet the Commanding General's desire to exercise Command and Control (C2) functions and the battle staff in CM operations. ASA constructed and integrated separate classified and unclassified computer system networks with De-

fense Information Systems Network (DISN) Services. The exercise network connected nodes including several locations in the Miami, FL metropolitan area; the Joint Warfare Center (JWFC) Suffolk, VA; MacDill AFB, Tampa FL; and Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico. The full range of services provided over these networks include SIPRNET, NIPRNET, DSN, AUTODIN (DMS), VTC, Defense Red Switch Network (DRSN), and single channel TACSAT.

Success in September required planning initiated six months earlier.

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Col. Daniel Gerstein, 93rd Signal Brigade commander, and 93rd Signal Brigade Command Sergeant Major Paul Scandrick receive a brief on ASA's Blue Advance preparation from David Colon. The room in the Goya Building was used prior to the exercise to configure systems and during the exercise as the civil agency player cell.

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The ASA Future Operations Branch, headed by David Colon, IT specialist, led the ASA team that consisted of members of the Security Division, Tech Control, Telecommunications Center (TCC), and VI Branch. In coordination with Bell South, Richard Chastain, future operations division specialist, coordinated circuit provisioning among exercise sites. Security of networks is critical and Eloise Elmer, information systems security manager,

completed requirements for Interim Authority to Operate (IATO) for the new network segments established for the exercise.

Build out complete, mission focus turns to day-to-day operations for the ASA team including 24/7 coverage for all functional areas including network systems troubleshooting, firewall administration and assistance by the TCC for AUTODIN/AMHS issues. All-in-all, a tremendous C4 effort and a job well done in support of the warfighter.

Air Force Birthday

Airman 1st Class Patricia Bennett, left, holds the sword while Master Sgt. Guadalupe Calsada cleans the blade after ceremoniously cutting the cake during the Air Force 55th birthday celebration held Sept. 18 at the Thurman Building main conference room. Observing from the back row are (left to right) Maj. Gen. Robert Bishop, Brig. Gen. F.C. Williams, and Chief Master Sgt. Bruce Taylor.



(photo by Sgt. Lucy Pabon)

What's so funny about GTMO?

Comedy Central joins USO to bring laughter to troops in Cuba

Story and photos by Army
Sgt. Michelle Pesoa
Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

The naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba has been host to a number of notable visitors during Operation Enduring Freedom, but on Aug. 27 a delegation arrived whose only desire was to show support for the men and women deployed here as part of the ongoing war on terrorism. And get some laughs.

The USO, in partnership with cable station Comedy Central, brought 11 comedians to Cuba to entertain the troops Thursday night. The taped shows will air on



From left, Jim Gaffigan, Modi, Greg Giraldo and Laurie Kilmartin proceed to McCalla Hangar.

cable in late October and will be repeated through December.

The entertainers invited included such names as Colin Quinn, Lenny Clark and Tony Rock. The USO and Comedy Central just

completed a successful three-show set at McGuire AFB in New Jersey in July.

"The USO's mission is to provide a 'touch of home' to the troops," said Betty Naylor, the USO tour producer who handled the mammoth task of booking nearly a dozen comics and getting them here. She has booked acts for Cuba before, most recently Charlie Daniels.

The comics' GTMO experience started with a noon arrival Aug. 27. The guests were checked into the CBQ and driven to the Windjammer club in the early

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afternoon for some refreshments and a briefing given by Army Lt. Col. Joseph Hoey, the Public Affairs Officer of JTF-160. The overview gave the entertainers and production staff the lowdown on what kind of troops have been deployed to Guantanamo, who runs the base, and what life is like for those deployed here.

The entertainers were then treated to a windshield tour while the stagehands worked behind the scenes with Morale, Welfare and Recreation's Craig Basil to adjust the lighting and sound system of the Windjammer for

Thursday's performances.

On Aug. 28, the USO comedians got off to an early start and embarked on a tour that took nearly eight hours, but which gave them a taste of how the different branches of service represented here work together in a Joint Task Force environment.

Bright and early at 8 a.m., the group paid a courtesy call to the base commander, Captain Robert A. Buehn. Buehn picked up where Hoey left off the pre-

vious day and showed the entertainers a slide presentation that touched on the history of the U.S. presence in Guantanamo Bay.



Comic Louis Ramey signed everything — even a Seabee's hardhat.

A Comedy Central cameraman mentioned to Buehn that he had been stationed here in the Navy 30 years ago, and comedian Lenny Clarke got a

quick laugh when he remarked that the barracks probably look exactly the same.

The role of the base in aiding Cuban refugees was

mentioned in Buehn's presentation, as well as the new function of the base as the holding place for Al-Quida detainees.

The next stop for the comics was the docks, where they got to hear about military boating operations for the Coast Guard Port Security Unit 307.

Lt. Tomas A. Kringel arranged for the comics to board some vessels and take a little trip out into the Bay. While waiting for his turn to board the next boat, Tony Rock took some time out to talk to some of the coastguardsmen.

"It's a double-edged

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sword,” he said, in reference to questions about being the brother of the more famous comedian in the family, Chris Rock.

There are benefits in name recognition, he admits, but he wants to be his own man. Coast Guard Lt. Dan J. Egan struck up a conversation with him and shared that he, too, has had to follow in someone else’s footsteps.

With regards to Rock’s approach to the Aug. 29 shows he

explained. “There will be no cursing, no mentioning of female body parts. Since this is a military show, I can’t do my Coast Guard joke,” he added jokingly.

“I have no military background, I’ve probably been in two fights in my life, but I got involved with the USO because that’s my way of contributing,” he said, explaining his reasons for supporting the troops.

“I’ve never met a more appreciative audience,” said



Comedian Tony Rock soaks his tired feet in the surf at Windmill Beach.

Clarke as he walked around and introduced himself — loudly — to all within earshot.

After an hour

and a half at the PSU, the group moved from a waterside view of the base to one of the lofty hills that dot the bay — the home of the Mobile Inshore Underwater Warfare Unit. Saturday Night Live comedian Colin Quinn broke off from the rest of the group to do a radio interview on “The Blitz” 103.1 while the

others were greeted by Navy Cmdr. Sheldon D. Stuchell of the MIUWU. The comics shook hands with the handful of

servicemembers on top of the hill and they were invited to peer through the large telescopes that few outside of the MIUWU’s staff get to see, let alone touch.

The tour deviated from the itinerary after the MIUWU visit. The visitors were met by a humvee and the comics piled into the back to experience the thrill of a ride down a winding hill in a tactical vehicle. The comics were all smiles when they hopped out of the ve-

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hicle at McCalla hangar, so the bumpy trip was worth it.

In the hangar the USO group met with the servicemembers who work at the Pink Palace and JTF-160 Headquarters. The troops expressed surprise at seeing a group of strangers descending on them, but they quickly warmed up to them.

They snatched up the autograph sheets provided by Naylor and seized the opportunity to get autographs and pose for pictures with

the celebrities.

The comics were allowed to sit inside a stationary helicopter and pose for a few more photos.

It was now past noon. There was a brief stop at the Windjammer to pick up security badges, then it was off to Windmill Beach. The comics had a chance to wade in the Caribbean Sea before taking a walk up the road toward Camp America.

Lunch was at Seaside Galley. Unfortunately, the galley was closed when the group arrived.

Strings were pulled, and the galley was opened for the group.

JTF-160's Sgt. Maj. Funaro greeted the group at the dining facility.

"I understand that you got a lot of new material today," he joked, in response to their disappointment at some delays and not getting to mingle with troops at lunchtime.

After lunch it was back to the grand tour. They left Seaside Galley and met with troops at the new chapel. Word spread quickly through the camp

and soon a sizeable crowd gathered under the domed roof for autographs.

"I will definitely check out the show," said Army Sgt. Steve Andronis of the 342nd MPs, of the upcoming performance. "I watch them all the time. Nick DiPaolo is one of my favorites."

"I have to work midnights, but I'm going to try to run out, catch the first show," said Spc. Autmn Blewett of the 346th MPs.

"I had just gotten to sleep, but I saw everyone coming up here and I had to

come right away."

The comics left Camp A after signing autographs.

The day concluded with a visit to the hospital. There they visited one of the patients, Sgt. Christopher Renard, 346th MPs. "It was looking like a boring day... Thank you!" said a stunned Renard.

Clarke summed up the Comedy Central tour with this: "What the troops are doing is tremendous. I've been involved with the USO for seven years now. Anytime they want me to go, it's my pleasure."

News briefs

Marine Corps Ball

Marine Corps Ball tickets are on sale every Tuesday from 11:30 a.m.-noon through Oct. 31 at the USSOUTHCOM north entrance of the Thurman Building.

Golf bonanza

Ultimate Summer Golf Bonanza tickets have been extended through Oct. 31. Through this special arrangement your purchase entitles you to the following:

- All the holes you can play from dawn to dusk
- All the range balls you can hit from 7 a.m.-5 p.m.
- All you can eat buffet

lunch from 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Prices range from \$10-\$27, depending on rank.

For information, contact Vanessa Estela or Maria Rosado at (305) 437-2726.

Yacht Club 5k

Put on your running shoes and join the fun during the 7th Annual Police Officer Assistance Trust and Intracoastal Yacht Club 5k Run/Walk. Oct. 26 at 7:30 a.m.

For more information, contact Jennifer Harms at (305) 437-2723.

Newcomers briefing

The Family Support

Center is sponsoring a newcomers briefing, Fri. Oct. 4 from 8 a.m.-12:15 p.m. in the Education Center at the Codina Building, Suite 110, 8300 NW 33rd St.

The briefings include presentations from the TRICARE representative, USSOUTHCOM health clinic, housing office, education office, legal, quality of life, MWR, DoD police and the command chaplain. To reserve your seat, call (305) 437-2667.

Area Tours

The Combined Federal Campaign is sponsoring tours every Wednesday in October.

• Oct. 9 – Little Havana Community Center, 9:15 a.m.-noon

• Oct. 10 – Miami Area Tour, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Free to military personnel and families (Note: This tour departs from the Codina Building, Suite 110, 8300 NW 33rd St.)

• Oct. 16 – Goodwill Industries, 9:15 a.m.-noon

• Oct. 23 – Miami Bridge Youth and Family Center, 9:15 a.m.-noon

• Oct. 30 – Dade Marine Institute, 9:15 a.m.-noon

All tours (except where noted) depart from Thurman Building.

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To register, call the FSC at (305) 437-2665.

shop will be held Oct. 21-24, 0800-1600 at the La Quinta Hotel, 8730 NW 27th St. For information, contact FSC, (305) 437-2665.

Separating?

If you are within 180 days of separating or within one year of retirement, there is a mandatory pre-separation briefing from 2:30-4 p.m. Oct. 16 in the Education Center at the Codina Building, 8300 NW 33rd St. For more information, contact FSC at (305) 437-2665.

TAP workshop

Transition Assistance Program Work-

WAPS catalog

The Air Force Weighted Airmen's Promotion System catalog provides a listing of needed materials for the upcoming promotion cycle.

To view, visit www.afpc.randolph.af.mil

For a copy of the study guide or the supervisory study guide, stop by the U.S. Army Garrison-Miami, Air Force Personnel Office or call (305) 437-1716.

Troops urged to vote by absentee ballot

By Gerry Gilmore
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Stateside and overseas troops and U.S. civilians overseas should now be requesting absentee ballots to vote in the November general election, DoD's senior voting official urged today.

Voters need to obtain and send in their Federal Post Card Application forms to register to vote, said Polli Brunelli, director of DoD's Federal Voting Assistance Program.

U.S. civilians and military members living overseas should ensure election officials receive their voter registration forms by Oct. 7.

Overseas voters should return their filled-out absentee ballots by Oct. 15 to ensure local election officials receive them in time, she said.

Overseas voters should use the

Federal Write In Absentee Ballot if their requested state absentee ballot does not arrive in time to allow voters to return it by the state deadline for counting, Brunelli pointed out.

The November election, she noted, involves about a third of the Senate, the entire House of Representatives, 37 state governors, and thousands of local races.

It's important that absentee voters sign and date the ballot return envelope, Brunelli said.

Some states, she added, require the envelope be postmarked, witnessed, or notarized.

Troops with questions on absentee voting should see their unit voting assistance officer or read their state registration and voting procedures on the Web site at www.fvap.gov.

Woman joins Air Force after fleeing Cuba

By Sue Campbell
59th Medical Wing Public
Affairs

LACKLAND AIR FORCE BASE, Texas

— Airman 1st Class Lizmailyn Llopis is a health service management apprentice at the Kelly Family Medicine Clinic here. When you first meet her, you find a professional military member, a little shy, but friendly with a slight Spanish accent.

Her outward appearance and demeanor show no sign of her past experience of living in and escaping

from her home country.

Eight years ago, Llopis and her family were living in Cuba and dreaming of a better life in the U.S.

“There is no freedom in Cuba,” she said. “The communist government decides how far you are going to get in life. It doesn’t matter how hard you work or how much you study.”

In August 1994, Llopis and some family

members attempted to leave Cuba. They set off in darkness one night in a small boat, but a storm forced them to return to Cuba. Days after their return, the Cuban government eased restrictions on leaving the country.

“Castro was frustrated that the United States was accepting

“ *There is no freedom in Cuba.* ”

Lizmailyn Llopis



Lizmailyn Llopis enters patient data at her workstation at the Kelly Family Medicine Clinic, Lackland AFB, Tex.

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Cuban refugees and he put out a decree that it was no longer illegal to leave Cuba," she explained. "He said anyone could leave the country if they wanted, (but) that America would not take us in."

Llopis' family decided to take their chances anyway. Her family and another family — 13 people in all — set off again in their boat heading toward U.S. shores.

"About 30,000 Cubans all left the country at the same time," she said. "My

group was in a small motor boat, more like a raft, and our only supplies were sugar cubes, some water, and some canned meat that was too salty to eat."

After a few hours at sea, the boat's engine stalled and they could not restart it. They drifted for hours in 10- to 15-foot waves.

"We were seasick, very hungry and seriously sun-

burned," Llopis said.

Fortunately, a CBS news team was in the area filming the mass exodus of Cubans and their ship happened upon the group. The news team contacted the U.S. Coast Guard, who rescued the group after 33 hours at sea.

They were transported to Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, located on the south-

ern tip of Cuba.

"We were placed in one of several refugee camps, along with many others who were rescued," Llopis said. "There were thousands of us and we were initially told we'd all be sent back to Cuba."

She described the camps as similar to what prison life must be like.

"We lived in tents with no air conditioning," she said. "We

“ We were seasick, very hungry and seriously sunburned. ”

Lizmailyn Llopis

bathed out of a bucket of water and ate pre-packaged military rations with supplements of rice and meat from time to time."

According to Llopis, their military guards, who alternated between Marine, Army and Navy troops, were initially detached and tough, but she understood their situation.

"There were so many of us, and we were all strangers to them," she said. "Most of them were young kids, far away

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from their families, just trying to do their jobs.”

Air Force personnel provided medical support to the refugees and schools were set up for the children.

“I helped teach the first and second grade classes,” Llopis said. “As time passed, the troops relaxed a little, and I actually made some good friends. I came to admire them and realized they were really doing the best they could to take

care of us.”

She recalled an experience during a fierce storm. Military members were running in and out of the tents making sure everyone was okay.

“I was amazed at their concern for us,” she said. “They displayed such humanity in the face of possible danger to themselves.”

She was so impressed with the military people she came to know that she told some of them someday she would like to join.

“They advised me that if I wanted a

military career, the Air Force had really good educational opportunities and great consideration for families,” she said.

As the days and months passed, the U.S. government evaluated each family’s situation and began authorizing people to leave the camp and take up residence in Miami.

“My family was allowed to stay because I was under 18 years of age. We finally headed to Miami after living in a refugee camp for eight months and 13

days.”

She arrived in Miami in May 1995, barely able to speak English. She joined the Air Force in September 2000 and was assigned to the 59th Medical Wing here in January 2001.

Now 25 years old, she is working on getting her U.S. citizenship.

“President Bush authorized all military personnel to get their citizenship early after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11 last year,” she said. “My family are all living in Miami and

working to obtain citizenship, as well.”

Inspired by the young troops she met years ago in austere conditions, Llopis has found stability and contentment serving in the military and looks to the future with excitement.

“I love the Air Force and plan to make it a career,” she said. “They took excellent care of us at Guantanamo Bay, and I’m proud to do my part to pay back my adopted country for the compassion and assistance we all received.”

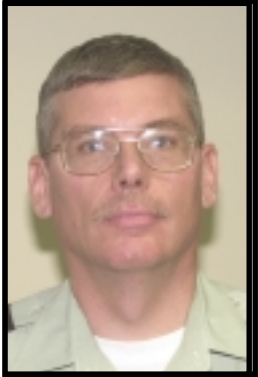
Sept. 11 Symposium

Rear Admiral James Carmichael, commander, 7th Coast Guard District, delivers a key-note address to local civic and emergency management organization leaders during a Sept. 11 Conference. The conference addressed the effects of 9-11 upon Dade County and was attended by local business, civic and emergency management leaders.



(photo by Chief Petty Officer Gabe Puello)

Master Sgt. Cliff Parker



Service: U.S. Army Reserve
Organization: U.S. Southern
Command, J-2, Security Operations Office

Duty title: Noncommissioned
officer in charge

Hometown: Edinburg, N.Y.

Hobbies: Spending time with my
children, traveling, gardening and
horses.

Favorite duty station: USSOUTHCOM security
operations for the last four years. The first time I have
been fully utilized as a reservist.

Career highlights: Working as an IG inspector
downrange with USSOUTHCOM.

Petty Officer 1st Class Diane Campbell



Service: U.S. Navy
Organization: U.S. Southern
Command, J-2

Duty title: Noncommissioned
officer in charge of Columbia
Team.

Hometown: Niagara Falls, N.Y.

Hobbies: Sailing

Favorite duty station:
USSOUTHCOM

Career highlights: Working with USSOUTHCOM
while still in Panama.

A special thanks

Maj. Gen. Gary Speer, former Deputy Commander of USSOUTHCOM addressed the members of the 65th Infantry, Puerto Rican National Guard, to thank them for their hard work during their deployment to USSOUTHCOM and award them command coins during a ceremony held at USSOUTHCOM Sept. 5.



(Photo by Sgt. Lucy Pabon)